UNITED NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/1994/SR.35
20 June 1996

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Fiftieth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 35th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 22 February 1994, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. VAN WULFFTEN PALTHE (Netherlands)

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GE.94-11261 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.35 p.m.

DRAFT PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE FIFTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE COMMISSION (agenda item 25) (annex)

1. The CHAIRMAN said that there seemed to be a consensus among the members of the Commission and the observers concerning the need to rationalize the Commission's work. In his opinion, the reform process should take place in several stages, the first of which would consist of a reordering of the agenda. He proposed that the new agenda should comprise fewer items and that their headings should be more general. In that way, it would be possible to deal with a larger number of subjects under each item, to adapt the Commission's work more easily to developments in the human rights situation throughout the world, since the items would relate to more general issues, and to reduce the number of statements. In principle, no item on the current agenda would suffer from such reordering.

2. A preliminary draft agenda, prepared in tabular form for the sake of clarity and ease of reference, had been distributed to participants and would be annexed to the summary record of the present meeting. In the light of the reactions to that draft among members of the Commission and observers, he would assess the possibility of formally submitting a draft recommendation to the Commission for approval at the present session. He therefore invited delegations to make comments.

3. Mr. EICHER (United States of America) said that, in general, the Chairman's proposal was extremely constructive. Clearly, the Commission would not be able to rationalize its work before streamlining its agenda which, over the years, had become too long and too complex. The purpose of streamlining the agenda should be to make the work of the Commission more efficient by enabling it to devote more time to pragmatic solutions for the protection and promotion of human rights throughout the world. His delegation supported the Chairman's proposal, which did not seek to delete any item from the present agenda, although, in the future, some items might be considered biennially or even dropped.

4. His delegation wished to make the following proposals. Items 4 and 5 of the draft could be merged; both related to human rights in general. Item 6 (Self-determination) could constitute a sub-item under item 12. Item 6 (a) (Palestine) would be better entitled "Occupied territories", thereby reflecting the current title more closely. Item 6 (b) (Cambodia) no longer raised a question of self-determination and, consequently, should be dealt with under item 15 (c) (Advisory services) among the other countries considered in that context, without mentioning Cambodia specifically. Items 8 (Right to development) and 9 (Democratic processes and elections) should both include a sub-item, addressing the relationship between development, democracy and human rights. Item 12 (Violations) could be entitled "Country situations", as in the expanded form of the draft. And item 16, concerning the work of the Sub-Commission, should appear earlier on the agenda.

5. Mr. URRUTIA (Peru) said that the Group of Latin American and Caribbean countries felt that the agenda should be reordered by balancing the various questions, without thereby abandoning the most important ones. The

restructuring of the agenda was a matter that needed to be studied in depth, and his delegation considered that the Commission would not have enough time to discuss that question thoroughly during the present session. It would therefore be preferable to establish an open-ended working group to examine all proposals and submit a report to the Commission at its fifty-first session.

6. Mr. DENHAM (Observer for Ireland) said that the question of the rationalization of the Commission's work should be discussed as part of a wider debate, notably on the changes that had taken place in international relations and on the role of the United Nations. The Commission should be a democratic and universal body, whose composition no longer needed to be limited. If its sessions were held in March/April, that would facilitate not only the task of preparing the report, but also relations between the Commission and the other bodies established under the terms of international instruments. Furthermore, given the recent positive developments in the Middle East and South Africa, the duration of the sessions could be reduced from six to four weeks.

7. Specifically with regard to the agenda, he proposed that the question of religious intolerance should form part of item 11; that the special item on elections should be eliminated and incorporated in item 11; and that the implementation of the two International Covenants should form the subject of a separate agenda item comprising two sub-items concerning (a) economic, social and cultural rights and (b) civil and political rights.

8. Mr. MEGALAKONOMOS (Observer for Greece) considered that questions that were no longer of concern to the international community should be removed from the Commission's agenda. On the other hand, however much time had elapsed, those that were still of concern to the international community in general and to the Commission in particular should remain on the agenda. At all events, any reform of the agenda should be the outcome of concerted, careful and non-contentious consultations.

9. Mr. BROTODININGRAT (Indonesia) emphasized that the question of the rationalization of the Commission's work had been discussed within the Group of Non-Aligned Countries on at least two occasions. In view of the Commission's already considerable workload, he thought that it would be unrealistic to expect it to take a decision during the present session. The most reasonable solution would be to establish an open-ended working group to study the question of the rationalization not only of the agenda but of the Commission's work. That working group could meet between the fiftieth and fifty-first sessions of the Commission, and submit a report containing its recommendations at the latter session. Since the question was so important, the working group's conclusions should clearly be reached by consensus. Lastly, the Commission should request the Secretary-General to provide the working group with all the assistance that it needed.

10. Mr. ZACKHEOS (Cyprus) said that the reorganization of the agenda should reflect the realities of the present-day world in regard to human rights and should take into account the events that had followed the end of the cold war. The removal of unresolved situations from the agenda would benefit only the perpetrators of human rights violations. In that connection, his delegation

welcomed the fact that the Chairman's draft did not envisage the deletion of any of the items on the present agenda. Given the importance of the question, his delegation too was in favour of the establishment of an open-ended working group that would meet to examine the agenda between sessions.

11. Mr. BAUM (Germany) said that the draft restructured agenda that the Chairman had submitted constituted the first step in the reorganization and rationalization of the Commission's work. His delegation believed that it would be more sensible to concentrate on that first step during the fiftieth session instead of embarking on an overall reform. In general, it supported the Chairman's draft but proposed a minor amendment to item 7, which should simply be entitled "Discrimination", since racism was the subject of sub-item (a). That would highlight the importance of sub-item (b) concerning "Women". The Commission's aim should be to have a restructured agenda for its fifty-first session.

12. Mr. KHOURY (Syrian Arab Republic) said that an operation as important as the restructuring of the Commission's work required time and consultations. An open-ended working group could meet between the fiftieth and fifty-first sessions and submit constructive proposals to the latter session. His delegation considered that the present agenda clearly reflected priorities and did not need major amendment. The guiding principles of the Commission's work, namely, non-selectivity, objectivity, impartiality and neutrality, should be borne in mind. Priority should be accorded to the rights of peoples subjected to foreign occupation or discrimination, the rights of individuals, the right to development and the strengthening of all human rights, on an equal footing. In general, there was a need to avoid duplication and to rationalize the division of labour between the Sub-Commission and the Commission. Within the context of the rationalization of the latter's work, the attention of NGOs should also be drawn to the manner in which they should play their consultative role. A subject as important as the rationalization of the Commission's work should be the subject of a compromise, leaving no scope for any political motivation that might lead to confrontation. For its part, the Syrian Arab Republic could not accept the United States proposal to delete the reference to Palestine from item 6 of the Chairman's draft. Palestine remained under foreign occupation and the question was still very important.

13. Mr. NEAGU (Romania) thanked the Chairman for submitting to the Commission a practical proposal to rationalize its agenda. That rationalization fell within the context of an overall endeavour to increase the efficiency of the United Nations, within the limits of a budget that would be equal to, if not lower than, its former amount. His delegation was in favour of a better grouping of topics and a reduction in the number of items and sub-items in order to make the deliberations more specific. Consequently, it endorsed the broad outlines of the preliminary draft prepared by the Chairman and supported the proposal that item 12 of the present agenda ("Question of the violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms") should be renamed "Country situations". However, it felt that the present item 9 ("Right of peoples to self-determination and its application to peoples under colonial or alien domination or foreign occupation") should remain a separate item. He suggested that the revised preliminary draft agenda should be reconsidered during the Commission's next session so that it could be further improved.

14. Mr. HALINEN (Finland) thanked the Chairman for his preliminary draft, which he supported enthusiastically. He endorsed the comments that had already been expressed by some delegations in favour of combining items 4 and 5 in a single item. He suggested that the question of the status of the International Covenants on Human Rights and the proper functioning of the bodies established pursuant to United Nations human rights treaties (present items 15 and 16, combined in a new item 14) should be higher on the Commission's agenda. He hoped that greater emphasis would be placed on questions relating to women, children, minorities, indigenous populations and displaced persons.

15. Mr. KOSSENKO (Russian Federation) welcomed the Chairman's proposal and agreed that rationalization of the Commission's agenda was timely. It was important that its future work should reflect the outcome of the World Conference on Human Rights and the realities of the present-day world. The time had come to improve international machinery in order to ensure even greater observance and promotion of human rights. His delegation suggested that the revised agenda should be built around a number of main groups of questions. The first could include those on which consensus had already been reached, namely, the rationalization of international instruments, harmonization of the system to monitor their implementation, cooperation among States, implementation and follow-up of the Vienna Declaration, the question of the mandate of the High Commissioner, and the indivisibility of the rights covered by the Covenants. The second would include large-scale violations of human rights and, in particular, the situation in various countries, which remained a central theme of the Commission's work. The third would be devoted to the protection of individuals against the most serious violations of their integrity (summary and arbitrary executions, enforced or involuntary disappearances, unfair trials). The fourth could be worded as follows: "Discrimination against minorities and protection of human rights in serious humanitarian emergencies (national or international armed conflicts, mass deportations, mass influxes of refugees, displaced persons and extreme poverty)".

16. Item 7 of the new agenda could simply be entitled "Discrimination". Item 9 could be incorporated in another group of questions, as some delegations had already proposed. With regard to item 11, his delegation would like it to reflect the idea of the indivisibility of the rights referred to in the Covenants. Concerning item 12, it believed that there were still some specific national situations (occupied territories, Cyprus) which should be dealt with separately. Item 13 could be linked to item 7. He recommended that the Commission should embark, cautiously but steadfastly, on a revision of its agenda.

17. Mr. STROHAL (Austria) in turn congratulated the Chairman on his proposal and said that the rationalization of the Commission's agenda should have three aims: to improve the Commission's work, to make it more comprehensible for the outside world, and to perfect and restructure the consideration of questions. From the standpoint of those three aims, the Chairman's proposal constituted an excellent basis for study. His delegation wished to make a number of practical proposals: items 4 and 5 of the revised agenda should be combined; item 16 should appear earlier; and the item concerning the question of human rights in armed conflicts should be combined with the item concerning

the coordination of activities within the international system, and particularly the United Nations system. His delegation believed that the Commission's agenda could be revised in the light of the changes that had been made in the agendas of the Sub-Commission and the General Assembly, which would enable the content of some items to be regularly updated. Lastly, his delegation was in favour of the continuation of consultations so that a new agenda could be adopted at the next session.

18. Mr. CANKOREL (Observer for Turkey) thanked the Chairman and, in turn, emphasized the timely nature of the rationalization of the Commission's agenda. In his delegation's view, there was a need, above all, to ensure impartial treatment of the questions considered. His delegation specifically proposed the combination of items 4 and 5, items 8 and 10, items 9 and 11 and items 14 and 15. Item 12 could be entitled "Violations and conflict situations", thereby enabling it to include elements (b), (c), (d), (e) and (f) of the present item 11. His delegation suggested that the secretariat should prepare a brief summary of the various views expressed during the present debate.

19. Mr. DAUFRESNE DE LA CHEVALERIE (France) commended the excellence of the Chairman's proposal and said that he was greatly in favour of a regrouping of agenda items. In his delegation's view, however, there were two topics that had not been dealt with in a satisfactory manner, namely, the question of children, which should constitute a separate item, and that of scientific and technological progress. It would be preferable to deal with vulnerable persons, rather than vulnerable groups, under item 13 of the revised agenda. Lastly, his delegation too was in favour of combining items 4 and 5.

20. Mr. ZHANG Yishan (China) said that the fiftieth session of the Commission marked a historic stage in its existence and served as a reminder of the extent to which it had developed over the years, in the light of the international situation which, in fact, was very different from that in the early days of the Commission. China supported the necessary reforms and considered that there was a need to embark on intensive consultations concerning methods of making those reforms acceptable to all parties and thereby improving the Commission's work. His delegation had made a careful study of the Chairman's preliminary draft, which it greatly appreciated; it was ready to listen to all the delegations and would itself be making some comments.

21. His delegation strongly supported the idea of establishing an open-ended working group to look into the question. With regard to the proposed clustering of some agenda items, he found it encouraging that there was a growing consensus within the Commission concerning the complementarity of civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights. That consensus should be reflected in the agenda. He regretted that some organizations had the impression that all the questions on the agenda related to item 12, which enabled them to engage in constant attacks and to make no practical proposals to improve the situations concerned. A clearer distinction should therefore be drawn between the various items, some of which should be merged. He emphasized the importance that his delegation attached

to that question, and its desire to cooperate, since cooperation was the only way in which the Commission could promote greater respect for human rights throughout the world.

22. Mr. MARUYAMA (Japan) said that the Commission's agenda was the result of ad hoc and uncoordinated amendments that had been made over the years. Consequently, the agenda was badly structured and frequently illogical and difficult to understand. There seemed to be unanimity within the Commission concerning the need for restructuring. Although the rationalization of work was just as important as the rationalization of the agenda, his delegation thought that it should be postponed to a later stage. The agenda should be restructured during the present session of the Commission. It was important that the debate should be held in a plenary meeting and he agreed with the Chairman that an inter-sessional meeting would hardly be appropriate. The proposals that had been made by the Chairman constituted a useful basis for discussion.

23. With regard to follow-up to the Vienna Conference, his delegation felt that it should apply to all agenda items and not be confined to a specific item. His delegation wondered whether it would really be appropriate to add a new item entitled "Democratic processes and elections", since that question could be considered under the item concerning civil and political rights. With regard to country situations, his delegation thought that it would be preferable to consider that question exclusively under item 12 or item 15 of the agenda. For example, the human rights situation in Cambodia, which was currently considered under item 6 (Self-determination) or the situation in South Africa, which was considered under item 9 (Democratic processes and elections), should be dealt with under item 12 or item 15. And lastly, the possibility of adding sub-items under agenda item 12 should not be excluded.

24. Mr. KEDZIA (Poland) said that his delegation had long held the view that a reform of the Commission's working methods was essential. The various delegations had differing opinions on ways and means of achieving that end. In his delegation's opinion, it would be insufficient merely to restructure the agenda, but that operation would be a good starting-point for more extensive reform. In fact, it would be the first stage of a reform of the Commission, but also of the Sub-Commission, which would make both bodies more efficient. His delegation supported the idea of an inter-sessional open-ended working group, on the understanding that it should be clearly stipulated from the outset that the restructuring of the agenda was merely the beginning of a reform process that needed to be completed. He suggested that another meeting of the Commission should be devoted to that question, so that the outcome of the various consultations could be considered.

25. With regard to the possible grouping of certain agenda items, he endorsed the idea of amalgamating items 4 and 5. He would like the question of the rights of aliens to be included on the agenda, possibly under item 10. He regretted that no agenda item was specifically devoted to the Centre for Human Rights and wondered, for example, under which item a country could request an increase in the resources allocated to the Centre. Apart from those specific points, however, he felt that it was vitally important to hold a substantive debate on the entire question.

26. Mr. HYNES (Canada) warmly congratulated the Chairman on his proposal. For a long time Canada had thought that the Commission should consider the question of the rationalization of its work and believed that the time had now come to take practical measures to that end. The restructuring of the agenda should lead to a logical and flexible presentation of issues in which new problems could be incorporated. It should also lead to a reduction in the number of statements. Some speakers had affirmed that the agenda was the result of a highly complex process of development and political compromise which should be taken into account. For its part, Canada believed that there was a need for a simple grouping of certain agenda items, and not for a total restructuring. It endorsed the proposal made by the United States delegation to the effect that the relationship between democracy, development and human rights should be examined more closely. On the other hand, it was less convinced of the appropriateness of combining items 4 and 5. Although those items were fairly similar, it should be borne in mind that the High Commissioner for Human Rights had been entrusted with such an important mandate that his report to the Commission should form the subject of a separate item.

27. With regard to the rights of women, which the Irish delegation thought should be the subject of a separate item, his delegation, although deeply concerned about that question, was not convinced that it was a good idea to introduce a new item. It therefore called for a more thorough examination of that question. It was not in favour of the proposed establishment of an ad hoc working group to consider that question or of the proposed inter-sessional meeting. It did not feel that there was any need to call the Commission's work into question, since the Vienna Declaration contained a set of highly comprehensive guidelines which laid down the policy the Commission should follow. He encouraged the Chairman to continue on the course of action on which he had embarked and, if necessary, to draw up a new version of his preliminary draft.

28. Mr. FLINTERMAN (Netherlands) said that several excellent ideas had so far been put forward in the debate on the restructuring of the agenda, a subject on which he himself wished to make some comments. First of all, he was fully in favour of rationalizing the agenda; indeed, it might be possible to go even further than had so far been envisaged. He thought that it was a good idea to combine items 4 and 5, but reserved the right to give more thought to that matter in view of the powerful argument that had been put forward by Canada.

29. Items 6 and 8 could also be combined under a new item entitled "Self-determination". Likewise, it would be preferable to combine items 9 (Democratic processes and elections) and 11 (Civil and political rights), and also items 14 (Promotion and mechanisms) and 15 (Advisory services). In that way, the agenda would be limited to 15 items. In addition, some agenda items could be worded differently: he proposed "Equality and discrimination" for item 7 and "Minority groups, indigenous populations and marginalized groups" for item 13.

30. The world had changed greatly since 1946 and the agenda should reflect those changes. The Commission could initially consider the report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, followed by the report of the Sub-Commission, and then the question of self-determination, which would be

followed by the questions of equality and discrimination, economic, social and cultural rights, and lastly a final issue, covering items 12, 13 and 14 of the new agenda, which would be directly devoted to implementation, follow-up and promotion.

31. Mr. ENNACEUR (Tunisia) congratulated the Chairman on his initiative and said that his preliminary draft had been considered by the African Group, which had engaged in an extensive exchange of views on the subject. While understanding the desire to make progress on the question of the agenda during the present session, the African Group was aware of the importance of maintaining a consensus within the Commission. However, the debate had shown that it would be difficult to reach a consensus on the Chairman's proposals at the present session. The African Group was convinced that the restructuring of the agenda could not be studied separately, but should be considered within the framework of more complete rationalization of the Commission's work. In fact, it was the latter type of rationalization that was essential; the restructuring of the agenda was merely a consequence of that process. In his view, a restructuring of the agenda would not be sufficient unless simultaneous concern was shown for comprehensive rationalization of the Commission's work, which would have to be accompanied by a reduction in the volume of the documentation, since the three points were closely interrelated.

32. The restructuring of the agenda should therefore be the outcome of a more extensive process that should begin with an examination of consciences and a detailed study of the Commission's working methods. Some speakers thought that there was a need to change the sequence of the agenda items. He questioned the validity of that approach, since the sequence reflected the importance which was attached to certain questions and was the result of historical development. Others had spoken of a "slimming cure", but it should be borne in mind that the Commission had constantly expanded its field of concern and the international community had a legitimate interest in all questions relating to human rights. However, he acknowledged that that universal aspiration was limited by the time and means at the Commission's disposal.

33. He agreed that relevant proposals had been made, not only in the document drawn up by the Chairman but also during the meeting. However, both he and the African Group as a whole remained convinced that no hope should be entertained of being able to modify the agenda during the present session. In order to do so, considerable time would be needed so that the members could hold consultations, reach a mutual understanding and endeavour to convince those who had misgivings. Hence, the African Group was totally in favour of the idea of an open-ended working group which would meet between sessions to evaluate the Commission's working methods. It would not be possible to consider restructuring the agenda until that first stage had been completed.

34. Mr. VERGNE SABOIA (Brazil) acknowledged that the question of the restructuring of the agenda and the rationalization of the Commission's work was a highly complex matter, probably due to the fact that the Commission's field of activity had constantly expanded over the years. However, it was quite normal to begin by modifying the agenda in order to adapt it to the work of the various bodies concerned with human rights. With regard to the preliminary draft submitted by the Chairman, his delegation, like the Canadian

delegation, thought it was important that the proposed new items 4 and 5 concerning, respectively, the report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the follow-up to the World Conference on Human Rights should be considered separately even if they were interrelated, since they dealt with questions arising from two different mandates that might not fully coincide. On the other hand, as other delegations had suggested, item 9 (Democratic processes and elections) could be considered at the same time as item 11 on civil and political rights. Concerning item 15, his delegation was of the opinion that the question of technical cooperation activities in the field of human rights should be accorded higher priority and should not be considered solely within the context of advisory services. The wording of that item should therefore reflect that need, which had been recognized in paragraphs 69 and 70 of the Vienna Programme of Action. Reference to cooperation and coordination within the United Nations system could also be made in one of the sub-items.

35. In view of the concerns that some delegations had expressed in that regard, irrespective of any modification that might be made to the agenda the mandates established by the Commission at previous sessions would have to be borne in mind, although that did not necessarily mean that all the mandates should be maintained. Finally, if the Commission decided to set up an inter-sessional body to study that question, it would be helpful if the Centre for Human Rights and the secretariat could explain the practical consequences of the possible adoption, at the beginning of the fifty-first session, of any amendments that might be proposed by that body.

36. Mr. DON NANJIRA (Kenya) said that the rationalization of the Commission's work should not be confined to a simple restructuring of its agenda. First of all, there was a need to ascertain the exact role of the Commission, which questions it should consider, how it should do so and for what purpose. Until a specific answer to that question was forthcoming, any debate on the rationalization of the Commission's work would be pointless. The main aim should be to recognize and identify all the problems that were continuing to impede the full enjoyment of human rights throughout the world.

37. With regard to the questions to be included on the Commission's agenda, his delegation was of the opinion that it was essential to consult the regional groups, since only they could identify the priority questions for their region. Africa's priorities were not necessarily the same as those of Latin America. Consequently, the opinion of the regional groups should be sought before eliminating any agenda items, and it would then have to be decided which questions should be considered annually, biennially or not at all and what the relevant reports should contain.

38. As to the discussion topics, it was quite clear that emphasis should henceforth be placed on economic, social and cultural rights, which had always been neglected and, in that context, attention should be given to the right to development, extreme poverty, the problem of indebtedness, the environment, and the relationship between democracy and development, all of which would have to remain on the agenda for a long time. The situation of children, women and disabled persons, as well as refugees and displaced persons, also merited special attention. The question of the strengthening of the national capacities of developing countries and the formulation of information and education programmes to that end should also be accorded priority on the

Commission's agenda. Those were the problems with which it should concern itself in order to be able to perform its task in an appropriate manner and avoid wasting time. His delegation would therefore endorse the position of the African Group, which was in favour of the establishment of a working group on the restructuring of the Commission's agenda.

39. Mrs. MARKUS (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that there was unquestionably a need for rationalization of the Commission's work after the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, which had confirmed the crucial importance of human rights throughout the world. With regard to the restructuring of the agenda, her delegation endorsed the Chairman's proposal that persons requiring special attention should be grouped under a single heading: "Vulnerable groups"; disabled persons should also be included under that heading. On the other hand, she was not in favour of amending the wording of the present agenda item 4, since Palestine was still occupied and the Commission had an obligation to safeguard the rights of all persons wherever they might be. She considered that the same attention should be given to the two categories of rights but had no objection to combining certain items of the present agenda in order to enable the Commission to focus on priority questions. However, in the opinion of her delegation, which shared the African Group's viewpoint in that regard, the restructuring and rationalization work should be entrusted to a working group.

40. Mr. FASEHUN (Nigeria) said that the Chairman's proposal concerning the restructuring of the agenda was interesting but that question could not be decided hastily since it merited thorough consideration. The rationalization of the Commission's work had three aims: to lighten the agenda, to review and improve the Commission's working methods, and, in general, to reduce costs. Consideration of the means to achieve those aims would therefore require time and thought. For that reason, his delegation endorsed the African Group's proposal concerning the establishment of an inter-sessional open-ended working group to study all aspects of rationalization and, in particular, the preliminary draft agenda submitted by the Chairman.

41. Mrs. PENNEGARD (Observer for Sweden) said that the efficient functioning of the Commission was a question of the utmost importance, and clearly it was absolutely essential that the Commission should rationalize and update its working methods if it wanted to deal effectively with the numerous problems with which the international community was faced in the field of human rights. That would be a long and exacting task requiring constant efforts within the framework of an ongoing reform process. She therefore welcomed the Chairman's initiative in submitting a preliminary draft for a new agenda that could serve as a basis for further dialogue and consultations.

42. Her delegation supported some of the comments that had been made concerning that text. It felt that, in the new agenda, the main emphasis should be placed on the two Covenants and the other international instruments relating to human rights, which constituted the basis of all the efforts being made to ensure respect for those rights, and then on violations of those instruments, considered from the standpoint of country situations, particular phenomena such as summary or arbitrary executions or the situation of vulnerable groups, including women, children, disabled persons and indigenous populations. That would be followed by a study of the means needed to

strengthen the implementation of those instruments through particular mechanisms and advisory services. The restructuring of the agenda was merely a first, albeit essential, stage in the process of reforming the Commission's working methods. Consideration should subsequently be given to reducing the number of resolutions and decisions that it adopted by, for example, combining all those dealing with the same topic or possibly by adopting resolutions only on a biennial basis, thereby enabling the Commission to study some questions in greater depth.

43. Mr. NASSERI (Islamic Republic of Iran) thanked the Chairman for his personal contribution to the efforts that were being made to improve and rationalize the Commission's working methods. The question of the restructuring of the agenda had been discussed for a number of years. It might be helpful to point out that, during the forty-eighth session, the conclusion had been reached that such restructuring should form part of a general rationalization of the Commission's work, which seemed to be essential, and that the question could not be settled during the regular sessions. However, no consensus had been reached on the procedure to be followed in that regard. Quite clearly, such a consensus had still to be reached, and so his delegation saw no point in continuing an endless debate that would merely waste time. Instead of focusing on the questions to be included on its agenda, the Commission should consider ways to rationalize its work.

44. In that regard, the main question was whether an inter-sessional working group would be able to meet before the fifty-first session, whether it would be official or informal, where and when it would meet, what its terms of reference would be, whether it would examine an official basic document and, if so, whether the latter would be prepared by the secretariat, the Chairman of the Commission or the regional groups. His delegation would welcome clarification on those points.

45. The CHAIRMAN said that he was encouraged in his efforts by all the comments that had been made and assured members that he would keep them duly informed of progress in the consultations on that question.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.

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